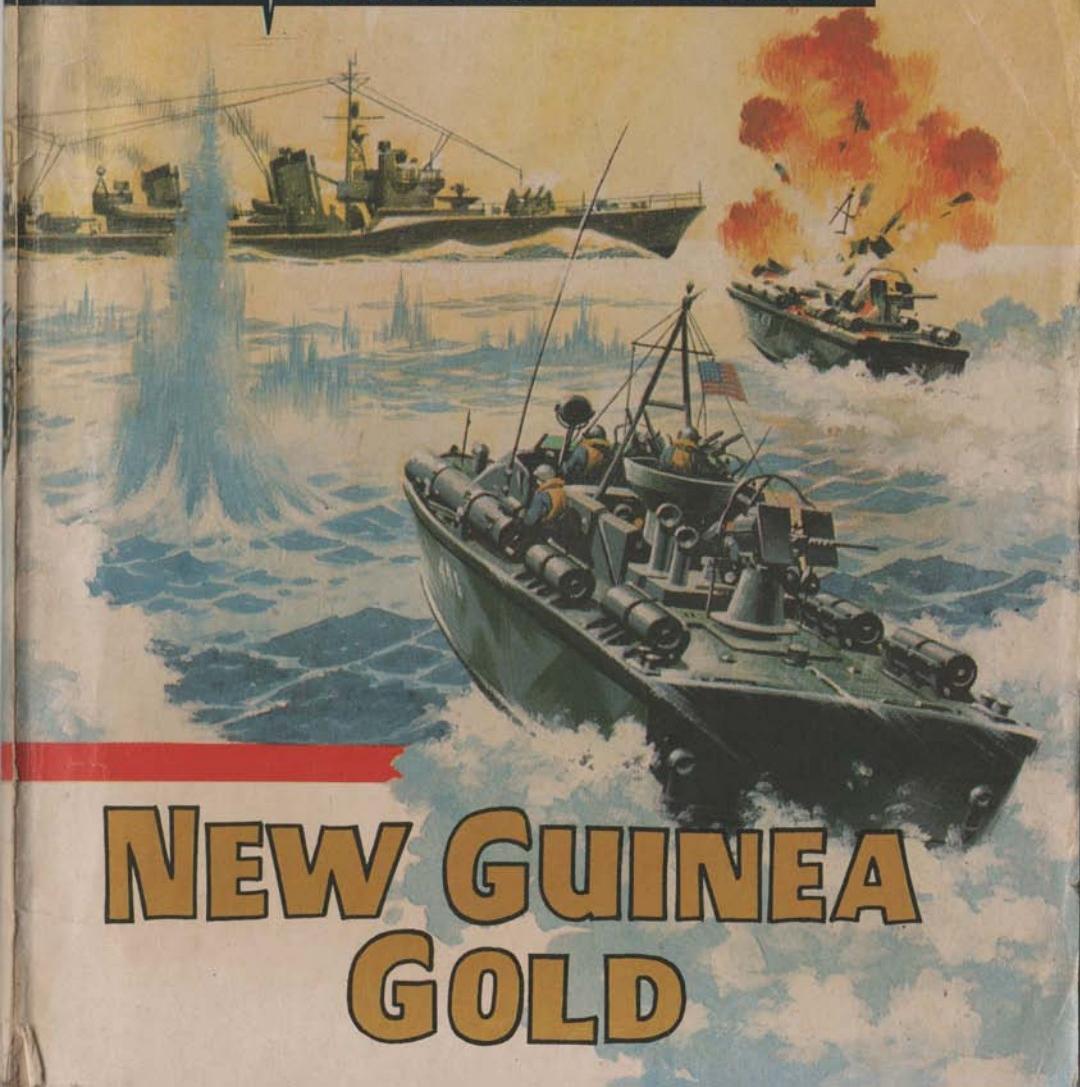


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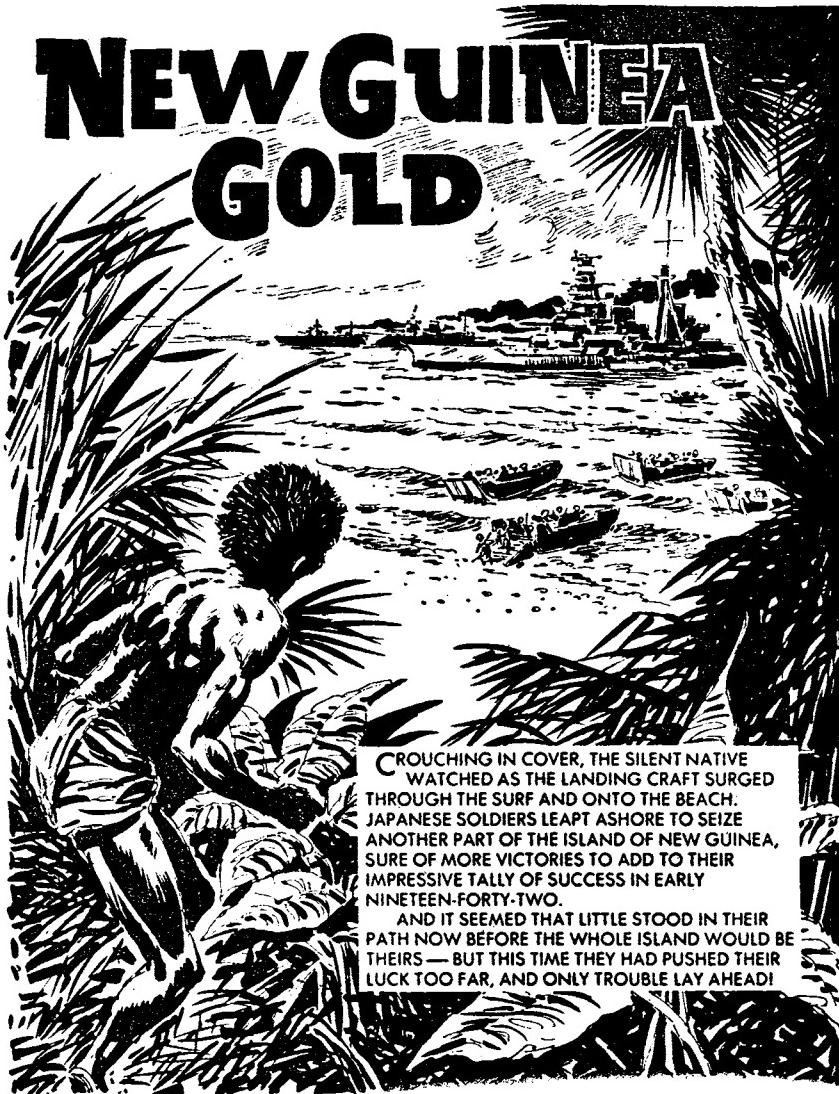


NEW GUINEA GOLD



Stars of Tennis — Peter Fleming

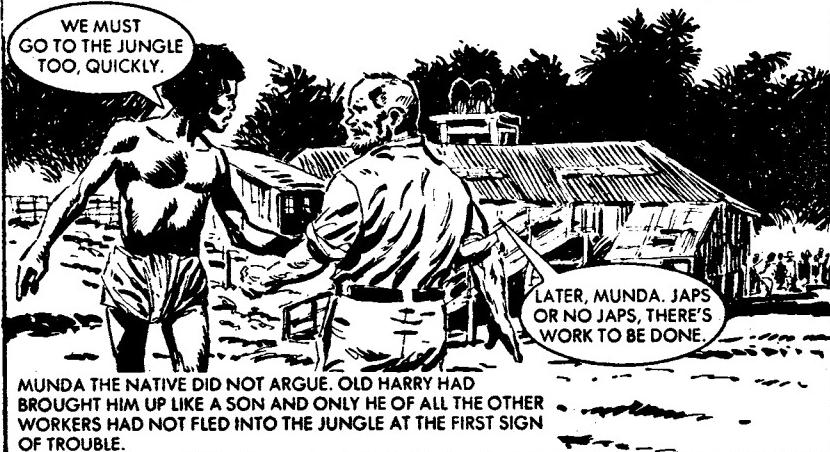
NEW GUINEA GOLD



CROUCHING IN COVER, THE SILENT NATIVE WATCHED AS THE LANDING CRAFT SURGED THROUGH THE SURF AND ONTO THE BEACH. JAPANESE SOLDIERS LEAPT ASHORE TO SEIZE ANOTHER PART OF THE ISLAND OF NEW GUINEA, SURE OF MORE VICTORIES TO ADD TO THEIR IMPRESSIVE TALLY OF SUCCESS IN EARLY NINETEEN-FORTY-TWO.

AND IT SEEMED THAT LITTLE STOOD IN THEIR PATH NOW BEFORE THE WHOLE ISLAND WOULD BE THEIRS — BUT THIS TIME THEY HAD PUSHED THEIR LUCK TOO FAR, AND ONLY TROUBLE LAY AHEAD!

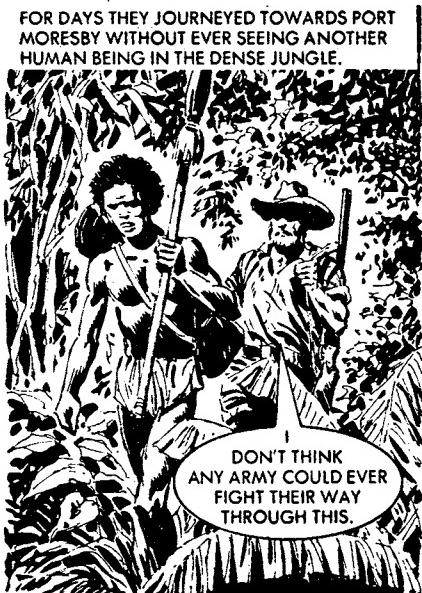
THE WATCHING NATIVE TURNED AND RAN BACK THROUGH THE HILLS TO THE JUNGLE CLEARING WHERE THE WORKINGS OF A GOLD MINE LAY. IT WAS OWNED AND RUN BY HARRY SIMPSON, A GRIZZLED AUSTRALIAN WHO HAD PROSPECTED HERE FOR YEARS.



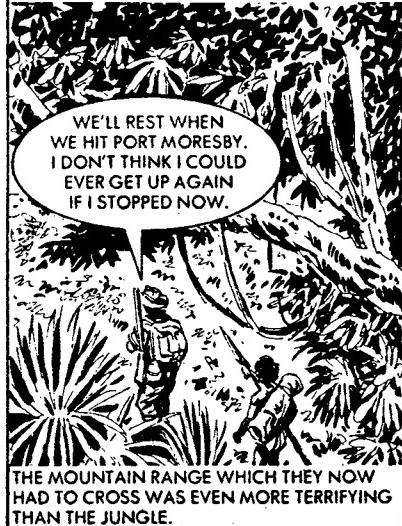
ONCE THE GOLD WAS WELL-HIDDEN, THE TWO MEN COULD DISAPPEAR INTO THE JUNGLE. THEY TOOK PLENTY OF SUPPLIES, AND HARRY SLUNG HIS GUN OVER HIS SHOULDER WHILE MUNDA CAME FROM HIS HUT WITH HIS RAZOR-EDGED SPEAR.



FOR DAYS THEY JOURNEYED TOWARDS PORT MORESBY WITHOUT EVER SEEING ANOTHER HUMAN BEING IN THE DENSE JUNGLE.



HARRY HAD DONE WELL TO HIDE THE GOLD. HE KNEW FOR CERTAIN NOW THEY COULD NEVER HAVE CARRIED IT ON THEIR BACKS.



THE HARSH COUNTRY FOUGHT THEM EVERY INCH OF THE WAY. BUT WHEN HARRY FINALLY BEGAN TO SAG, MUNDA PICKED HIM UP AND STRUGGLED ON WITH NO WORD OF COMPLAINT.



OLD HARRY WAS ON HIS FEET AGAIN WHEN THEY REACHED PORT MORESBY. THEY HAD MADE IT AT LAST TO THE TOWN WHERE THE RESISTANCE TO THE INVASION WAS BEING ORGANISED.



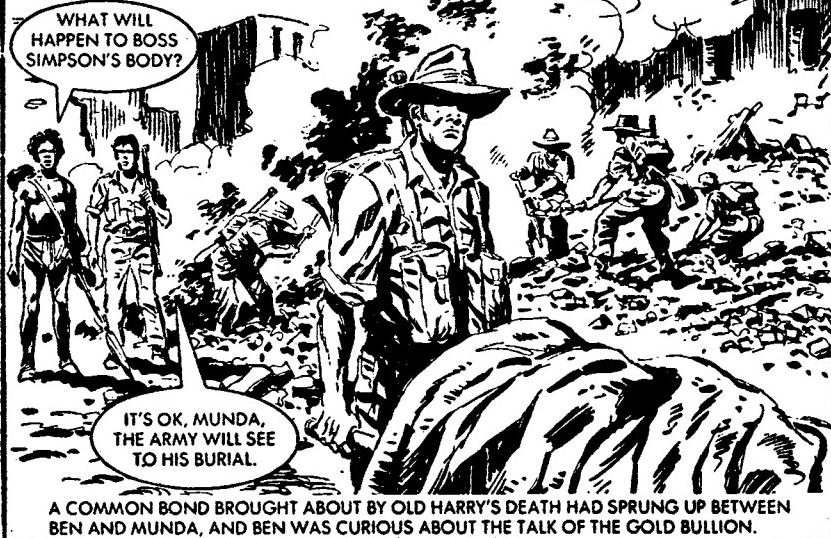
THE FIRST MAN THEY SAW TO ASK DIRECTIONS FROM WAS BEN FARRADAY, A PLANTER HOUNDED FROM HIS PLANTATION BY THE INVASION OF THE JAPS. HE HAD BEEN BORN IN BRITAIN BUT HAD LIVED OUT HERE FOR YEARS.



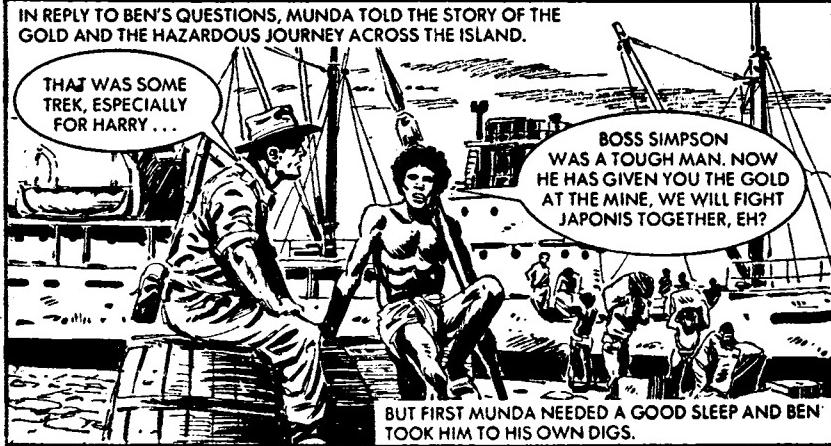
NOW BEN WAS ENROLLED IN A VOLUNTEER FORCE OF EX-MINERS AND PLANTERS BANDED TOGETHER INTO A MILITARY UNIT BUT NOT YET DETAILED FOR ANY SPECIFIC TASK.



THE AIR RAID WAS OVER BY NOW AND THE ARMY BEGAN TO CLEAR UP. AND THE JAPANESE INVADERS HAD YET ANOTHER DEADLY ENEMY — MUNDA.



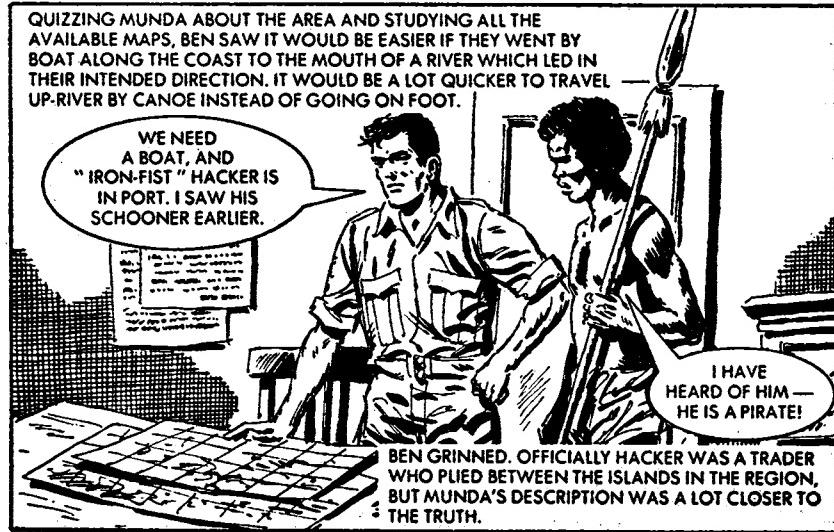
IN REPLY TO BEN'S QUESTIONS, MUNDA TOLD THE STORY OF THE GOLD AND THE HAZARDOUS JOURNEY ACROSS THE ISLAND.



THEN HE WENT TO SEE HIS SUPERIOR OFFICER WITH THE STORY OF THE GOLD. THE MEN OF THE VOLUNTEER FORCE WERE FAR FROM PLEASED AT NOT BEING USED AS A UNIT YET, AND BEN SAW THIS AS A GREAT CHANCE TO ADD TO THEIR POOR EQUIPMENT.



QUIZZING MUNDA ABOUT THE AREA AND STUDYING ALL THE AVAILABLE MAPS, BEN SAW IT WOULD BE EASIER IF THEY WENT BY BOAT ALONG THE COAST TO THE MOUTH OF A RIVER WHICH LED IN THEIR INTENDED DIRECTION. IT WOULD BE A LOT QUICKER TO TRAVEL UP-RIVER BY CANOE INSTEAD OF GOING ON FOOT.



WHEN BEN AND MUNDA ARRIVED AT THE DOCK WHERE IRON-FIST'S SCHOONER WAS BERTHED, THEY WERE IN TIME TO WITNESS AN ATTEMPT BY SOME LOCAL NATIVES TO STEAL SOME STORES PILED ON THE SCHOONER DECK. !



BEN KNEW IRON-FIST HACKER WELL. HE HAD DEALT WITH HIM IN THE PAST, AND KNEW HE COULD LOOK AFTER HIMSELF.

SURE ENOUGH, THE BURLY BEARDED SKIPPER CAME STRIDING FROM BELOW —



HE WAS A FEARSOME SIGHT, AND THE BLACK LEATHER GLOVE ON HIS RIGHT HAND HAD GIVEN RISE TO HIS NICKNAME. HE'D BEEN MAIMED BY MALAY PIRATES IN A FIGHT YEARS BEFORE AND HAD WORN HIS METAL FIST EVER SINCE.

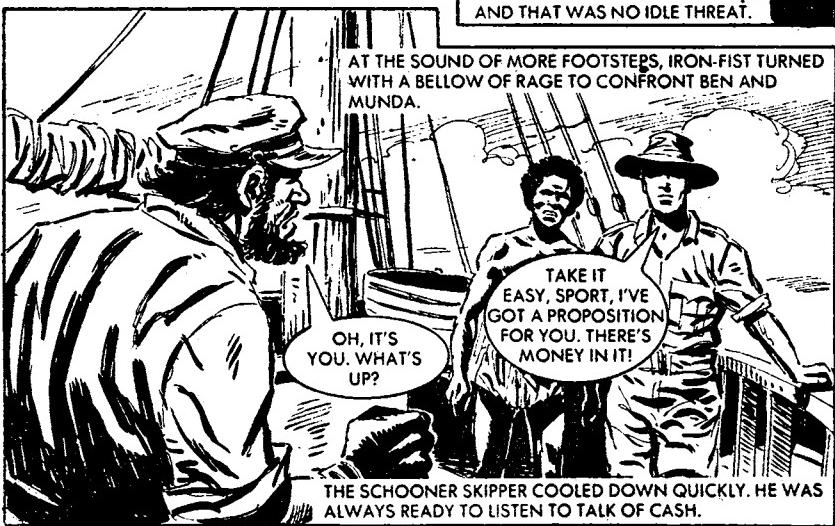
AND WHEN HE SWUNG THE HEAVY RIGHT HAND,
THE THIEVES WERE SOON PUT TO FLIGHT.



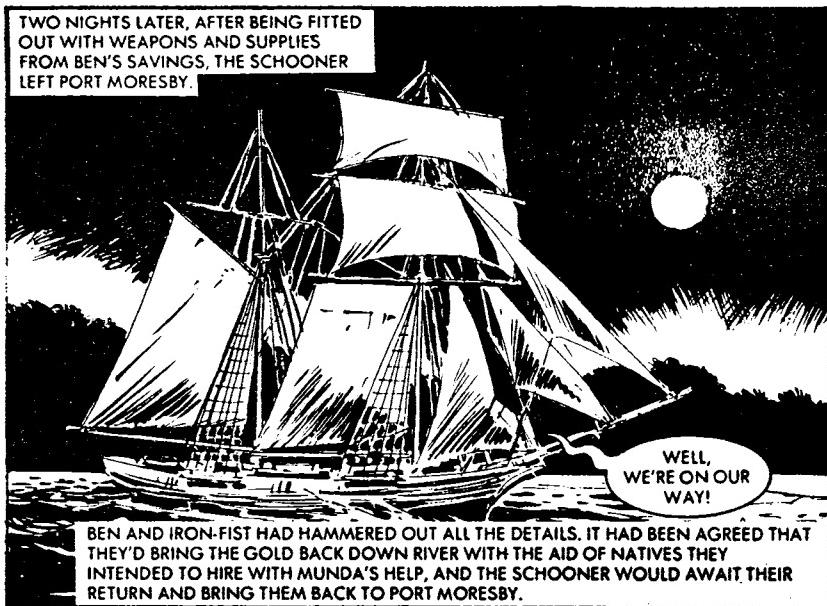
OVER THE SIDE ALL THREE WENT, CURSED ROUNDLY ON THEIR WAY.



AND THAT WAS NO IDLE THREAT.



KNOWING THAT IRON-FIST WOULD SOON SEARCH OUT THE COMPLETE STORY, BEN TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT THE GOLD AND THE NEED FOR THE SCHOONER TO TAKE THEM TO THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER.



THEY ALL KNEW IT WOULD BE A LONG AND DANGEROUS HAUL UP THE COAST. IRON-FIST RESPECTED THESE TRICKY WATERS AND KEPT HIS NATIVE CREW WELL AWARE OF THIS.



THEY MADE GOOD TIME, BUT TWO DAYS LATER THE SCHOONER WAS SPOTTED BY A JAPANESE RECONNAISSANCE FLOAT-PLANE.

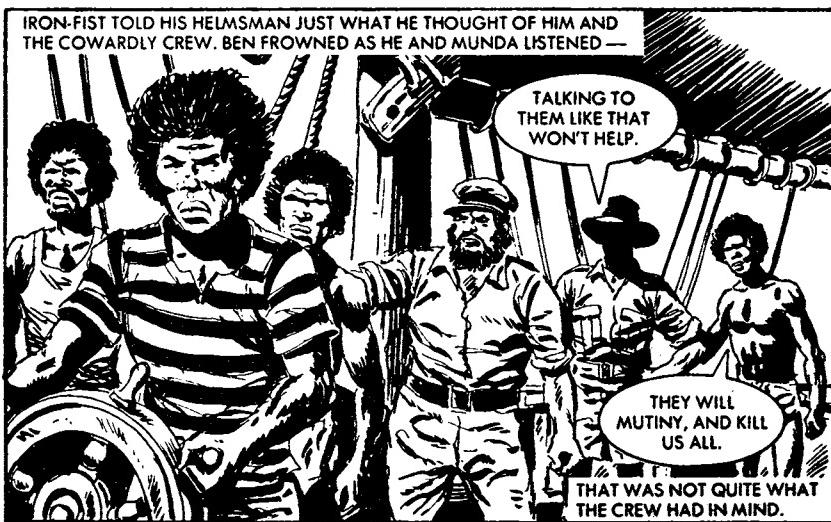


THE JAP PILOT AND OBSERVER DECIDED TO GIVE THE LONELY SAILING SHIP A FEW BURSTS TO RELIEVE THE BOREDOM OF THEIR PATROL. THEIR INTENTIONS WERE SOON VERY CLEAR —



HOT LEAD TORE INTO THE DECK PLANKING AS THE TWO FORWARD-FIRING MACHINE GUNS CHATTERED INTO LIFE. THE BULLETS FLEW ALARMINGLY CLOSE TO BEN AND HIS MATES.





THEY MADE NO ANSWER TO THE TIRADE OF OATHS, BUT THEIR MINDS WERE MADE UP. THEY WANTED NO PART OF THE WHITE MEN'S WAR, AND THAT NIGHT THEY DESERTED, LEAVING THE SCHOONER TO ITS OWN DEVICES WHILE THE SKIPPER, BEN AND MUNDA SLEPT BELOW.

NO NOISE.
CAPTAIN GO CRAZY
AND KILL!

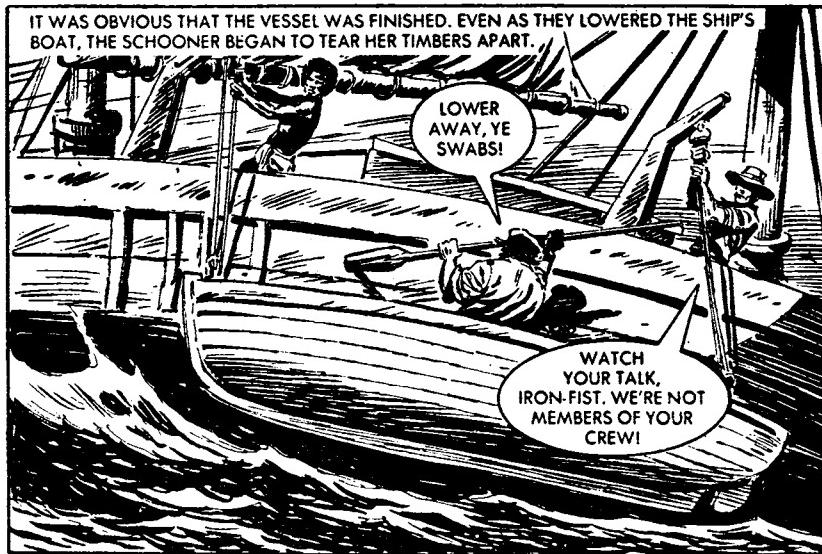
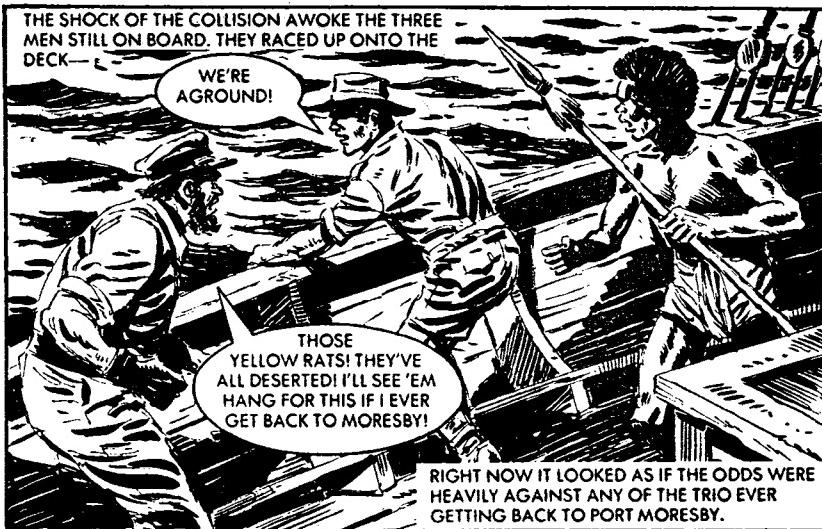
THE NATIVES SWAM ASHORE
AT A SAFE POINT.

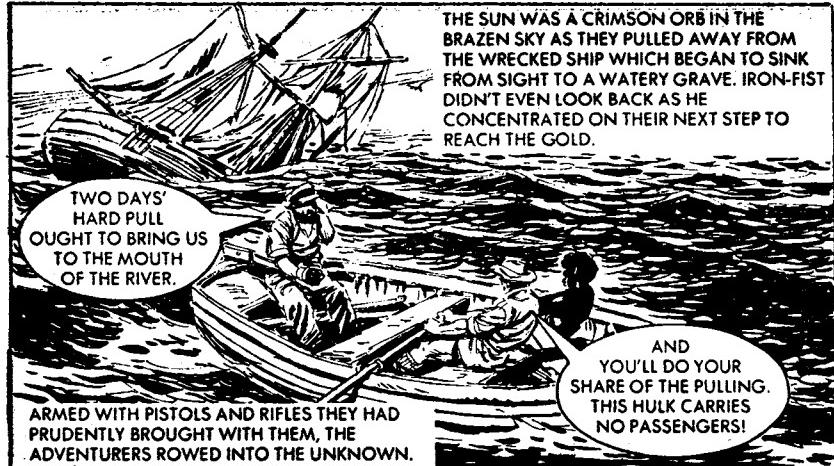
BUT WITH NO HAND ON THE WHEEL, THE SILENT SCHOONER DRIFTED GENTLY TOWARDS THE COAST WHERE SURF POUNDED OVER THE DEADLY REEFS.



THE SHIP STRUCK THE REEF WITH A CRASH, RIPPING A MORTAL HOLE IN HER ANCIENT KEEL. NOTHING COULD SAVE HER NOW.







THEY BEACHED CLOSE TO THE VILLAGE AND CAUTIOUSLY APPROACHED THE WATCHING NATIVES. SOME OF THE TRIBES WERE VERY FIERCE AND WAR-LIKE IN THESE REMOTE REGIONS AND A WHITE MAN WAS NEVER SURE WHAT SORT OF WELCOME HE MIGHT GET.



WHEN MUNDA HAD EXPLAINED ALL AND THE NATIVES WERE SATISFIED THAT THE STRANGERS MEANT THEM NO HARM, THEY ENTERTAINED THEM WITH A FEAST.



A DUG-OUT CANOE WAS SOON PURCHASED FOR THEIR CONTINUED TRIP UP-RIVER, BUT NO GUIDE WAS FORTHCOMING. NO AMOUNT OF TRADE TOBACCO COULD PERSUADE THE YOUNG MEN OF THE TRIBE TO VENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN.



DAY AFTER ENDLESS DAY THEY PADDED IN SWELTERING HEAT INTO THE VIRTUALLY UNEXPLORED INTERIOR. DANGER WAS NEVER FAR AWAY—



THAT WAS ONLY TOO TRUE. THE JAPANESE PATROLLED CONSTANTLY ON THE FEW JUNGLE TRAILS, AND THE AREA THEY WERE NOW IN WAS PEOPLED BY PRIMITIVE TRIBES STILL KNOWN TO BE HEAD-HUNTERS.

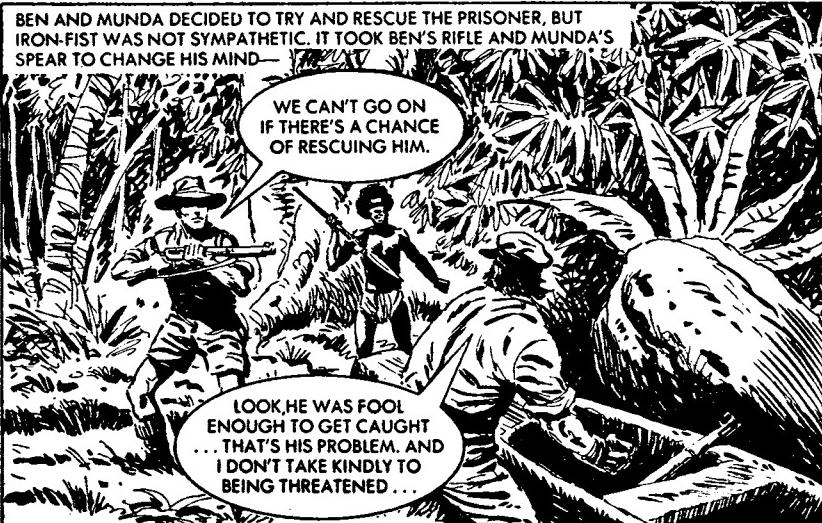
THEN, AS THEY WERE BREAKING CAMP ONE MORNING, THEY HEARD CANOES APPROACHING AND THE CHANTING OF A NATIVE SONG. THEY STAYED WELL-HIDDEN—



MUNDA'S NEXT WORDS CHILLED BEN TO THE BONE. THE HEAD-HUNTERS IT SEEMED, WERE ON THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR VILLAGE . . . AND THERE THEY WOULD CUT OFF THE WHITE MAN'S HEAD TO KEEP AS A TROPHY.



BEN AND MUNDA DECIDED TO TRY AND RESCUE THE PRISONER, BUT IRON-FIST WAS NOT SYMPATHETIC. IT TOOK BEN'S RIFLE AND MUNDA'S SPEAR TO CHANGE HIS MIND—



IGNORING IRON-FIST'S CONTINUED ANGRY CURSES, THEY TURNED THE DUG-OUT BACK DOWN THE RIVER AND WENT IN SEARCH OF THE HEAD-HUNTERS.



MUNDA SOON SAW WHERE THE CANOES HAD LANDED, AND IRON-FIST RELUCTANTLY PREPARED TO GO ASHORE WITH HIS COMPANIONS.



LIKE A TRACKER HOUND, MUNDA LED THE WHITE MEN FROM THE RIVER ON THE TRAIL OF THE SAVAGE NATIVES AND THEIR PRISONER.



THEY MADE THEIR FINAL APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE VERY CAREFULLY INDEED AND THE SIGHT THEY SAW WAS LIKE A SCENE OUT OF A NIGHTMARE. THE WHITE MAN WAS LASHED TO A POLE WHILE HIS CAPTORS DANCED TRIUMPHANTLY.



HE'S
STILL ALIVE!

WE'LL ALL BE
DEAD MEN IF THEY
CATCH US NOW!

BEN SIZED UP THE SITUATION AND PLANNED A DIVERSION TO RESCUE THE PRISONER.



YOU TWO CIRCLE
ROUND THE VILLAGE, AND
SET FIRE TO THE HUTS. IN THE
CONFUSION I'LL DASH IN
TO CUT HIM FREE.

BETTER
YOU THAN ME,
SPORT!

BUT EVEN IRON-FIST HAD TO AGREE THAT IT WAS
THE BEST ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM.

LEAVING BEN HIDDEN ALONE, IRON-FIST AND MUNDA MOVED SILENTLY INTO THE DARKNESS TO FIRE THE VILLAGE. THERE WAS PLENTY FOLIAGE TO SHAPE INTO THE TINDER-DRY TORCHES.



IN MINUTES THE HEAD-HUNTERS' VILLAGE WAS A BLAZING INFERNO, THE FEROCITY OF THE FIRE STRIKING FEAR INTO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE NATIVES.



IT WAS NOW OR NEVER FOR BEN TO DASH FROM COVER AND CUT THE MAN FREE. EVEN IN ALL THE CONFUSION, IT WOULD NOT TAKE LONG FOR THE HEAD-HUNTERS TO REMEMBER THAT THEY STILL HAD A PRISONER.



UNSEEN, BEN REACHED THE PRISONER AND SLASHED AT HIS BONDS.



THE SAVAGES SUDDENLY BECAME AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THEY WERE ABOUT TO LOSE A PRIME HEAD.



IF THEY WERE TO MAKE IT TO THE RIVER, BEN KNEW HE MUST HALT THE HEAD-HUNTERS' WILD CHARGE. HE DROPPED TO ONE KNEE—



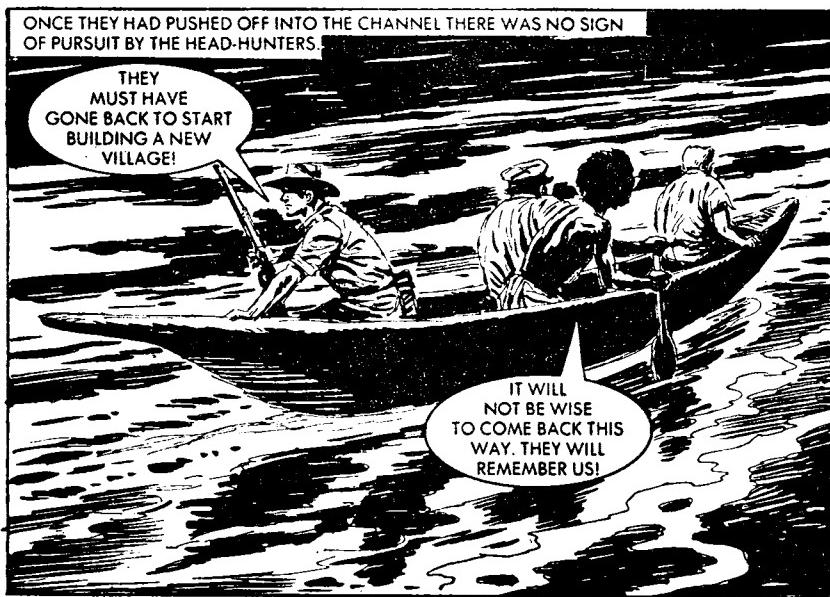
PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES THE NATIVES HEARD THE BANG OF A RIFLE AND FELT THE IMPACT OF BULLETS. THEY STOPPED IN CONFUSION, ANGRILY MILLING AROUND JUST AS MUNDA AND IRON-FIST RE-APPEARED AT BEN'S SHOULDER.



THE RETREAT BACK TO THE RIVER WAS DONE IN RECORD TIME, WITH BEN HALTING ANY CLOSE PURSUIT WITH WELL-AIMED BULLETS.



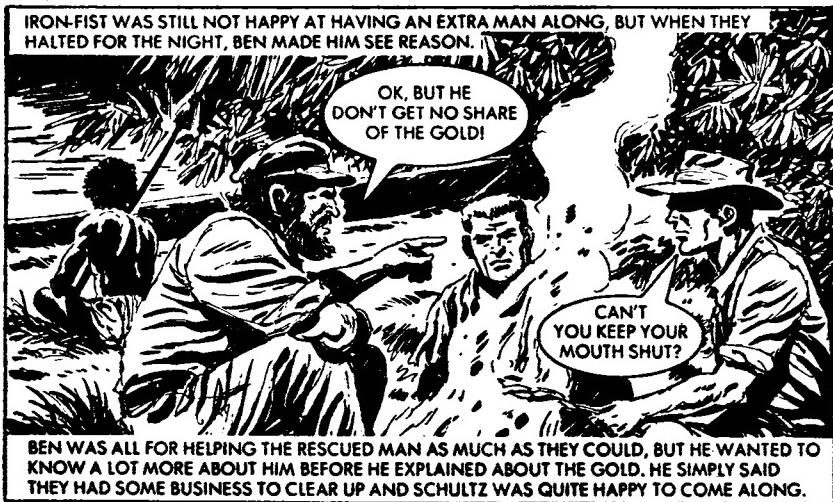
ONCE THEY HAD PUSHED OFF INTO THE CHANNEL THERE WAS NO SIGN OF PURSUIT BY THE HEAD-HUNTERS.



WHEN THEY COULD AT LAST RELAX A LITTLE, BEN QUIZZED THEIR NEW COMPANION. HIS ENGLISH WAS HEAVILY ACCENTED AND HE SAID HE WAS KARL SCHULTZ, A GERMAN PLANTER DRIVEN OUT BY THE JAPANESE INVASION OF NEW GUINEA.



SCHULTZ SAID HE HAD NEVER BEEN BACK. HE APPEARED TO BE VERY ANTI-NAZI, A MAN WHO NO LONGER CONSIDERED HE HAD ANY DUTY TO GERMANY.

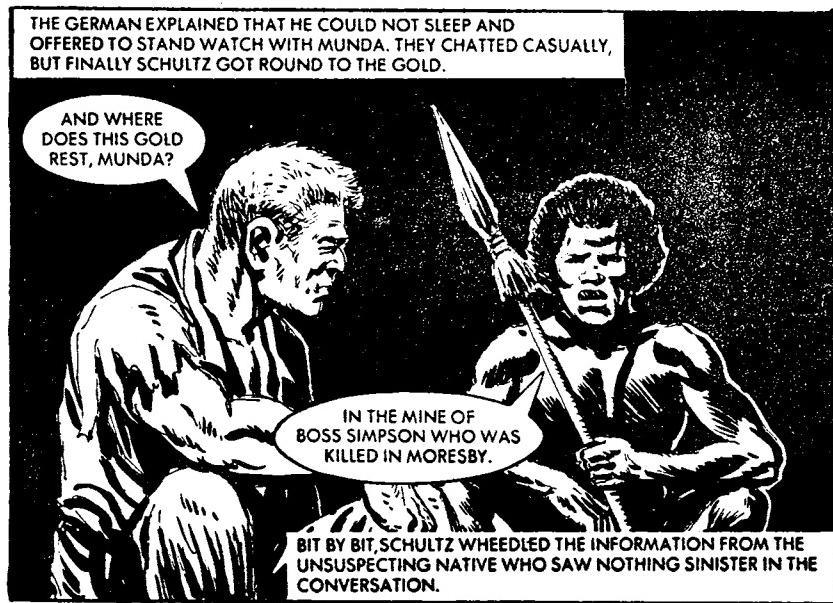


BEN WAS ALL FOR HELPING THE RESCUED MAN AS MUCH AS THEY COULD, BUT HE WANTED TO KNOW A LOT MORE ABOUT HIM BEFORE HE EXPLAINED ABOUT THE GOLD. HE SIMPLY SAID THEY HAD SOME BUSINESS TO CLEAR UP AND SCHULTZ WAS QUITE HAPPY TO COME ALONG.

I LATER THAT NIGHT, WHEN BEN AND IRON-FIST SLEPT AND MUNDA STOOD GUARD,
SCHULTZ QUIETLY AND CAREFULLY ROSE FROM THE GROUND AND STOLE TOWARDS
MUNDA—



THE GERMAN EXPLAINED THAT HE COULD NOT SLEEP AND OFFERED TO STAND WATCH WITH MUNDA. THEY CHATTED CASUALLY, BUT FINALLY SCHULTZ GOT ROUND TO THE GOLD.



LATER NEXT DAY, WHEN THE RIVER WAS NO LONGER NAVIGABLE, THE GOLD HUNTERS WERE FORCED TO COME ASHORE.



MUNDA WAS RIGHT. AFTER TWO DAYS STEADY CLIMBING THEY SAW THE MOUNTAIN WHICH ROSE ABOVE THE MINE.



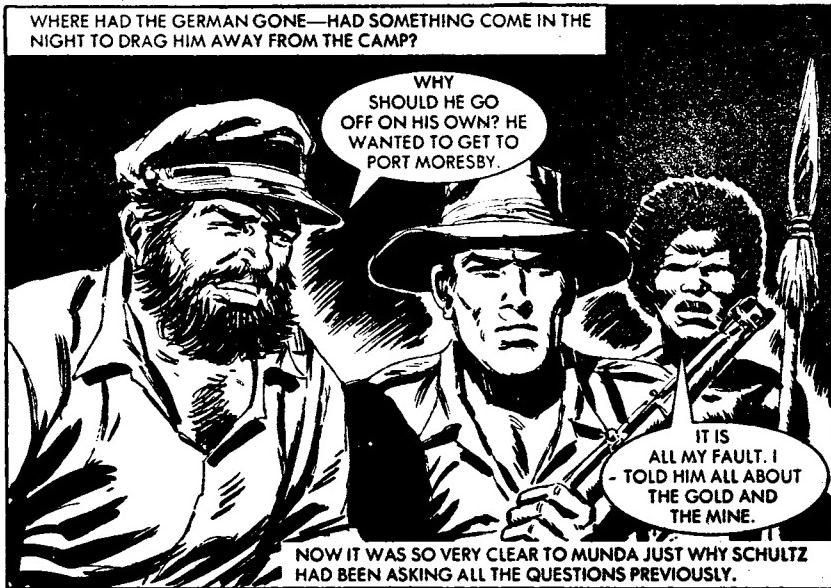
THAT NIGHT, AS IRON-FIST DOZED OFF DURING HIS STINT ON GUARD, SCHULTZ ROSE QUIETLY TO HIS FEET AND SLIPPED OFF INTO THE JUNGLE. ONE THING WAS CERTAIN—SCHULTZ WAS NOT AS INNOCENT AS HE CLAIMED.



WHEN BEN WOKE UP AN HOUR LATER, SCHULTZ WAS LONG GONE AND IRON-FIST WAS STILL ASLEEP.



WHERE HAD THE GERMAN GONE—HAD SOMETHING COME IN THE NIGHT TO DRAG HIM AWAY FROM THE CAMP?

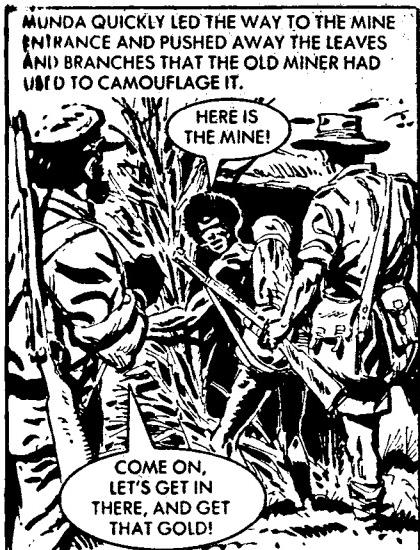


IRON-FIST WAS SO ANGRY THAT HE GRABBED MUNDA BY THE THROAT AND WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM THERE AND THEN BUT FOR BEN.



THEY KNEW THEY MUST MOVE ON QUICKLY, AND THEY MADE GOOD TIME OVER THE ROUGH TERRAIN. TWO DAYS LATER THEY REACHED THE GOLD MINE—

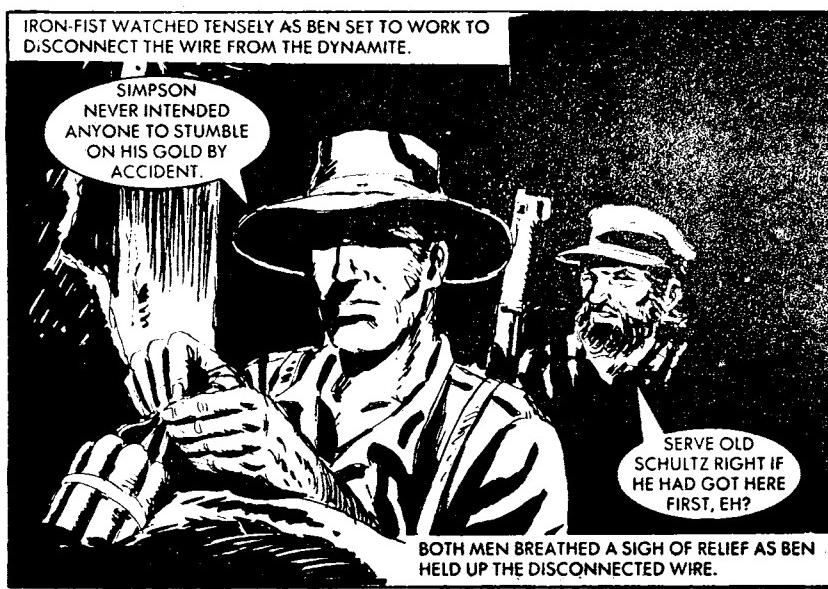




BEN CAUGHT THE WIRE IN THE BEAM OF HIS TORCH, AND HE FOLLOWED IT TO THE SIDE OF THE SHAFT TO SEVERAL STICKS OF DYNAMITE WHICH WERE CONCEALED BEHIND SOME ROCKS.



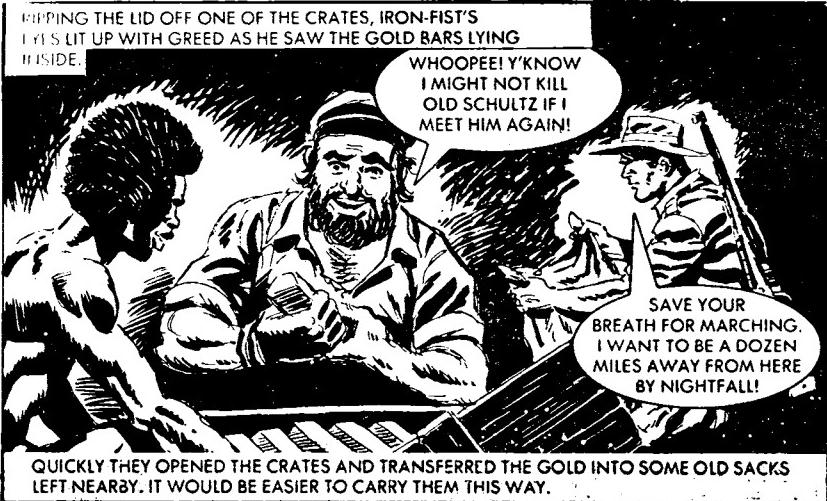
IRON-FIST WATCHED TENSELY AS BEN SET TO WORK TO DISCONNECT THE WIRE FROM THE DYNAMITE.



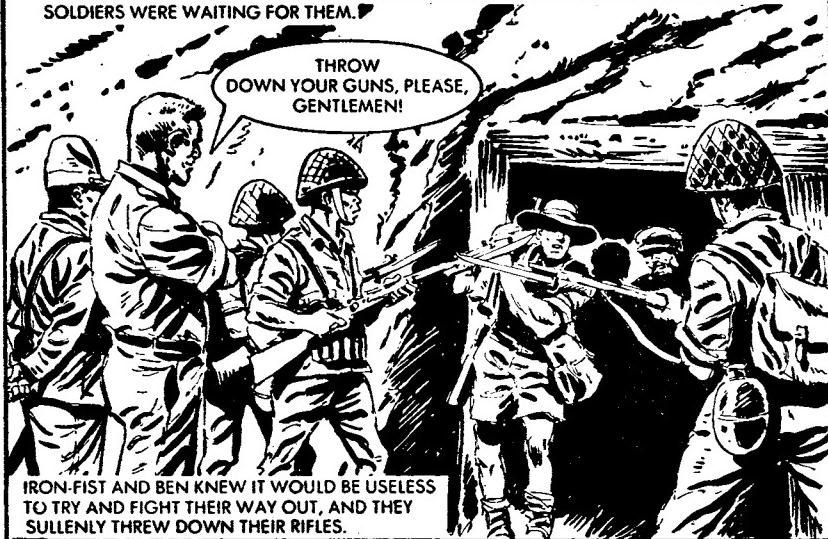
FINALLY THEY REACHED THE END OF THE SHAFT, AND
COVERED THREE WOODEN CRATES WHICH THEY KNEW
COULD CONTAIN THE GOLD.



RIPPING THE LID OFF ONE OF THE CRATES, IRON-FIST'S
EYES LIT UP WITH GREED AS HE SAW THE GOLD BARS LYING
INSIDE.



BUT WHEN THE THREE MEN RETRACED THEIR STEPS TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE MINE, THEY FOUND THAT A RECEPTION COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF SCHULTZ AND SEVERAL JAP SOLDIERS WERE WAITING FOR THEM.



SCHULTZ INFORMED BEN AND HIS COMPANIONS THAT HE AND THE JAP SOLDIERS HAD BEEN HIDDEN AROUND THE MINE FOR SOME TIME, AND HAD EVEN SEEN THEM ENTER THE ACTUAL MINE-SHAFT.



WHEN SCHULTZ CONTINUED TO TAUNT THE THREE MEN, THANKING THEM FOR RESCUING HIM FROM THE HEAD-HUNTERS, IT WAS MORE THAN IRON-FIST COULD STAND, AND HE RUSHED AT THE GERMAN.



THE SAILOR'S VENGEANCE WAS SHORT-LIVED, BUT HE HAD TIME TO SEND SCHULTZ CRASHING TO THE GROUND, BEFORE HE HIMSELF WAS SET UPON BY THE JAPS.



IRON-FIST WAS FORCED TO THE GROUND AND COVERED BY TWO JAP SOLDIERS WITH BAYONETS. BEN WAS ALSO THREATENED AND HELD BACK FROM HELPING HIS FRIEND.



BUT NOBODY NOTICED MUNDA WHO WAS EDGING AWAY FROM THE GROUP TOWARDS THE JUNGLE.

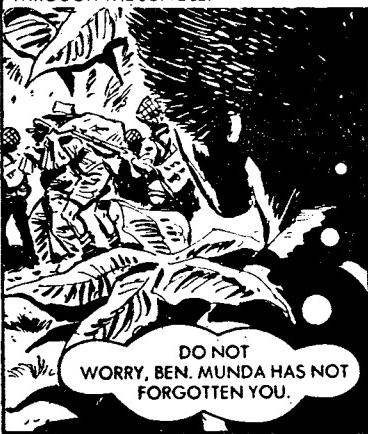
ONE JAP SOLDIER TURNED ROUND AND SPOTTED MUNDA RUNNING TOWARDS THE JUNGLE, AND HE FIRED AT THE FLEEING NATIVE. FORTUNATELY THE JAP WAS A POOR SHOT AND MUNDA WAS ABLE TO REACH THE SANCTUARY OF THE TREES UNHURT!!!



AFTER INSPECTING THE GOLD, THE JAPS FORCED BEN AND IRON-FIST TO CARRY IT FOR THEM AS THEY STARTED THE LONG TREK BACK TO THEIR BASE.



MUNDA HAD BEEN FORGOTTEN FOR THE MOMENT, BUT THE NATIVE INTENDED TO FOLLOW HIS FRIENDS TO THEIR DESTINATION AND HE WATCHED SILENTLY AS THEY WERE FORCED THROUGH THE JUNGLE.



EVENTUALLY THE JAPS AND THEIR TWO PRISONERS REACHED A SMALL TOWN ON THE COAST THAT SERVED AS THE JAPANESE H.Q. FOR THE AREA.



THE JAP BASE WAS DIRTY AND CONSISTED OF SEVERAL HUTS AND A FEW WAREHOUSES. IT WAS ALSO OBVIOUS THAT THE JAPS DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH BEN OR IRON-FIST FOR THEY LEFT THEM SITTING OUTSIDE A WAREHOUSE GUARDED BY TWO MEN.



A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE TWO PRISONERS WERE ESCORTED TO A NEARBY WAREHOUSE WHICH HAD BARS ACROSS THE WINDOWS, AND WHICH BEN RIGHTLY SUSPECTED THE JAPS USED AS A TEMPORARY PRISON.



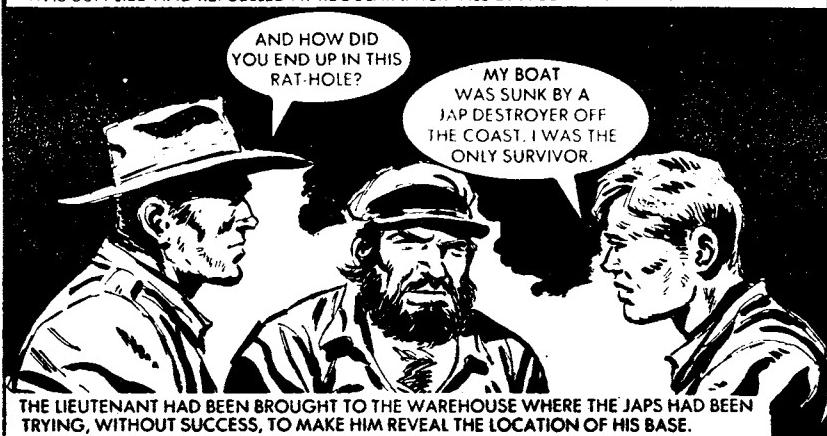
AFTER THE DOOR HAD BEEN LOCKED AND BOLTED, BEN AND IRON-FIST EXAMINED THEIR SURROUNDINGS, AND WERE SURPRISED TO SEE THAT THE WAREHOUSE HAD ANOTHER OCCUPANT, WHO WAS SITTING IN THE CORNER WATCHING THEM.



THE PRISONER INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS LIEUTENANT BRAD RAYNER OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY, AND HE EXPLAINED WHAT HE HAD BEEN DOING BEFORE HE WAS CAPTURED BY THE JAPS.

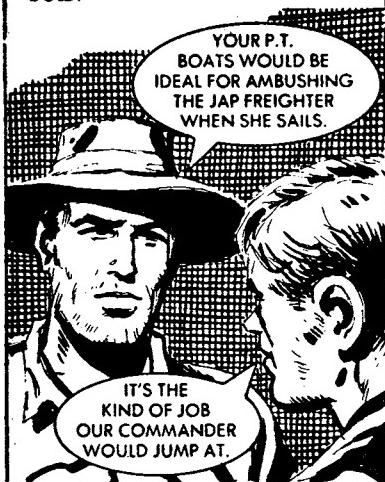


RAYNER EXPLAINED THAT HIS FLOTILLA HAD A HIDE-OUT FURTHER UP THE COAST WHERE IT WAS SUPPLIED AND REFUELLED AT REGULAR INTERVALS BY A SUPPLY SHIP FROM AUSTRALIA.



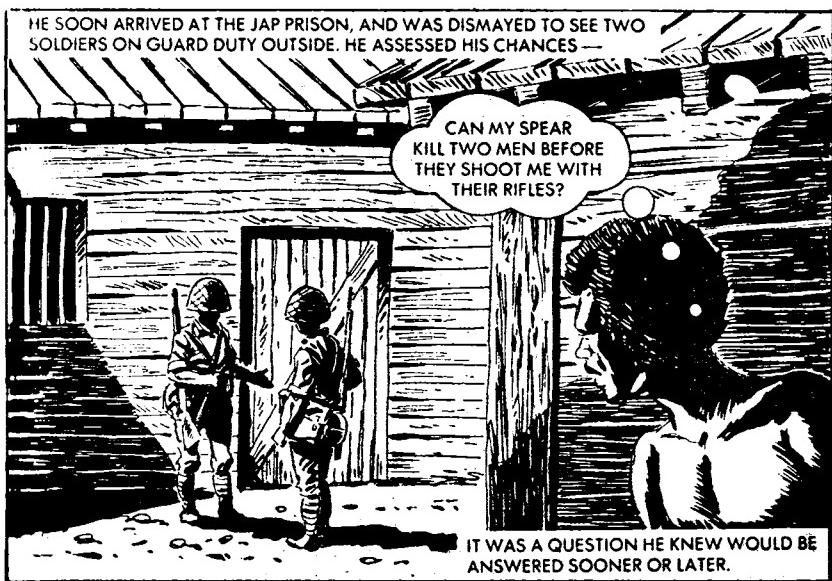
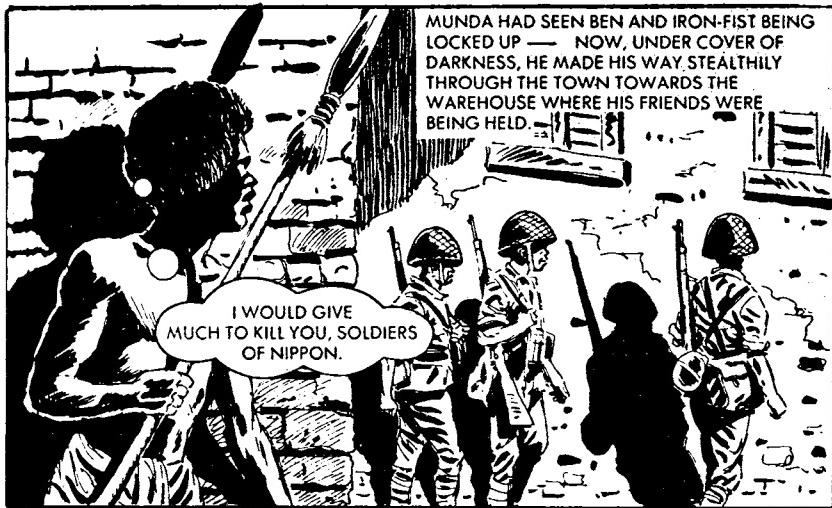
THE LIEUTENANT HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO THE WAREHOUSE WHERE THE JAPS HAD BEEN TRYING, WITHOUT SUCCESS, TO MAKE HIM REVEAL THE LOCATION OF HIS BASE.

KNOWING THAT THE JAPS MEANT TO MOVE THE GOLD BY SEA TO THE EAST INDIES, BEN TOLD RAYNER ABOUT THEIR INCREDIBLE JOURNEY, AND ABOUT THE GOLD.



BUT AS THE THREE PRISONERS TALKED INSIDE THE WAREHOUSE, A SHADOWY FIGURE WAS LOOKING DOWN ON THE SMALL PORT — IT WAS MUNDA, WHOM EVERYBODY SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN ABOUT.





BUT MUNDA WAS TO HAVE AN ALLY, IN THE SHAPE OF A STRAY DOG WHICH HAD BEEN PROWLING AROUND THE BASE LOOKING FOR SCRAPS. THE DOG WAS IN A MEAN MOOD AND WHEN THE JAPS STARTED THROWING STONES AT THE ANIMAL, IT TURNED AND STARTED BARKING AT THE TWO GUARDS.



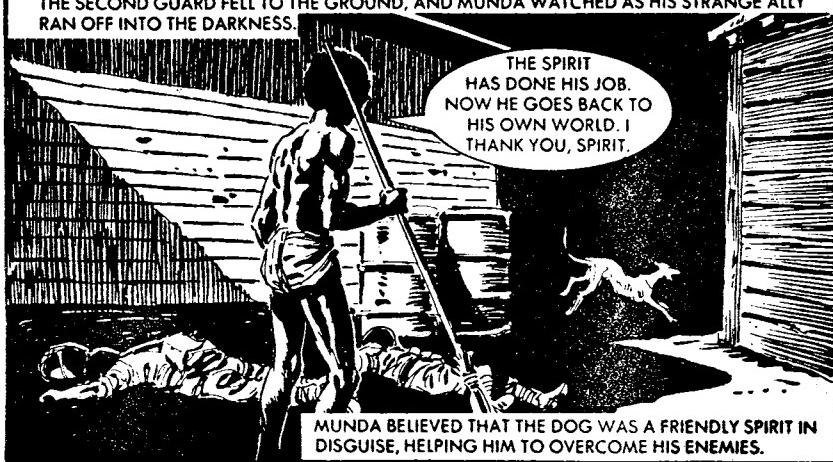
HE SUDDENLY SPRANG OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND PLUNGED HIS SPEAR INTO THE NEAREST GUARD.



THE OTHER GUARD WAS ABOUT TO FIRE HIS RIFLE AT MUNDA, WHEN THE DOG DASHED IN AND SNATCHED AT THE SLING. THIS GAVE MUNDA THE CHANCE HE WAS WAITING FOR—



THE SECOND GUARD FELL TO THE GROUND, AND MUNDA WATCHED AS HIS STRANGE ALLY RAN OFF INTO THE DARKNESS.



MUNDA THEN PUT HIS SPEAR TO ANOTHER USE — OPENING THE WAREHOUSE DOOR.

CAN YOU
HEAR ME? IT IS—
MUNDA. I HAVE COME
TO SET YOU FREE!



IN LESS THAN A MINUTE THE THREE PRISONERS WERE BURSTING OUT OF THE WAREHOUSE.

GOOD ON YOU,
MUNDA. I SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN YOU WOULDN'T
JUST RUN AWAY!

THE SPIRITS
HELPED ME. ONE CAME
AS A DOG!

STOPPING ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO RELIEVE
THE DEAD JAPS OF THEIR RIFLES, THE
FUGITIVES RAN FOR THE JUNGLE.

BE CAREFUL.
THERE ARE MEN OF
NIPPON ON THE
STREETS.

THEY'RE THE
ONES WHO'D BETTER
BE CAREFUL. I GOT
AN ITCHING TO KILL
A FEW OF THE
DEVILS.





BEN HEARD THE NOISE OF MORE JAPS COMING DOWN THE STREET, AND HE ORDERED HIS FRIENDS TO MOVE OUT. THEY ALL KNEW THAT TO RUN FOR THE JUNGLE WAS NOW THEIR ONLY CHANCE.



SOON THE FUGITIVES WERE CLEAR OF THE TOWN, AND ENTERING THE DARK JUNGLE. BUT THE SOUNDS OF THE JAPANESE PURSUIT COULD STILL BE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE.



THE JAPS SKIDDED TO A HALT AT THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE, FOR THEY WERE RELUCTANT TO PURSUE THE FOUR FUGITIVES ANY FURTHER.

AFTER THEM. THEY WON'T GET FAR!

FOOL!
WHY FOLLOW THEM? LET THEM DIE IN THERE. THERE IS NOWHERE FOR THEM TO GO!

FOR THE JAPANESE PATROL IT WAS BACK TO THE SAFETY OF BASE.

BUT THE JAPANESE OFFICER HAD BEEN WRONG, FOR MUNDA WAS AN EXPERT ON THE WAYS OF THE JUNGLE, AND HE WOULD MAKE SURE THAT HIS FRIENDS DID NOT DIE.

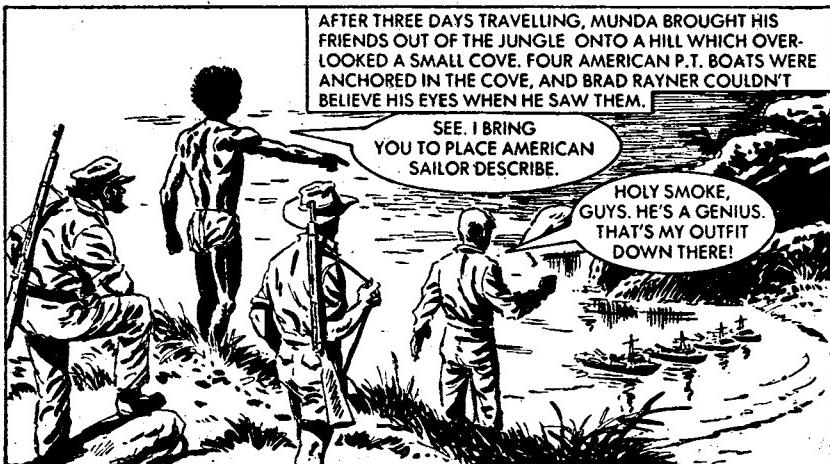
WHERE'S HE TAKING US?

UP THE COAST TO WHERE THE AMERICAN P.T. BOATS ARE HIDING OUT!

AFTER THREE DAYS TRAVELLING, MUNDA BROUGHT HIS FRIENDS OUT OF THE JUNGLE ONTO A HILL WHICH OVERLOOKED A SMALL COVE. FOUR AMERICAN P.T. BOATS WERE ANCHORED IN THE COVE, AND BRAD RAYNER COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES WHEN HE SAW THEM.

SEE. I BRING YOU TO PLACE AMERICAN SAILOR DESCRIBE.

HOLY SMOKE,
GUYS. HE'S A GENIUS.
THAT'S MY OUTFIT DOWN THERE!



TWO AMERICAN OFFICERS WHO WERE ABOARD ONE OF THE P.T. BOATS WERE SUDDENLY SHOCKED TO SEE FOUR FIGURES SPLASHING THROUGH THE WATER TOWARDS THEM. ONE OF THE OFFICERS SHOUTED A WARNING.



THE AMERICAN COMMANDER, HANK CROSBY, WAS OVERJOYED TO SEE BRAD, AND HE WAS EAGER TO FIND OUT WHAT HAD BEEN HAPPENING TO THE LIEUTENANT.



CROSBY WAS TOLD ALL ABOUT RAYNER'S CAPTURE AND ESCAPE, AND OF BEN AND IRON-FIST'S QUEST TO RETRIEVE THE GOLD FROM THE JAPS. HE WAS NOT, HOWEVER, IMPRESSED WITH THE AMOUNT OF GOLD INVOLVED.

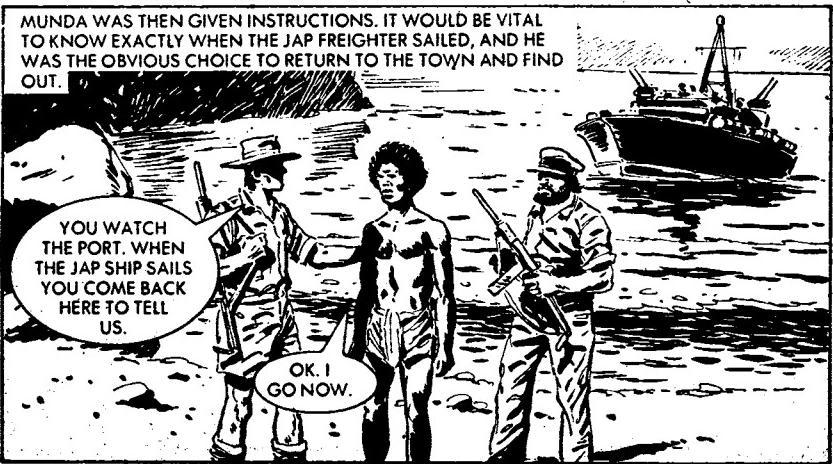


SO IT'S ONLY
WORTH SEVERAL THOUSAND
POUNDS, STERLING. GEE,
THAT AIN'T MUCH
GOLD.

ENOUGH
TO EQUIP OUR
VOLUNTEERS, AND TO
TURN US INTO A FIRST
CLASS FIGHTING
UNIT!

THE COMMANDER DECIDED TO HELP BEN AND IRON-FIST BY ATTACKING THE JAPANESE FREIGHTER WHICH WOULD BE CARRYING THE GOLD WHEN SHE SAILED.

MUNDA WAS THEN GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS. IT WOULD BE VITAL TO KNOW EXACTLY WHEN THE JAP FREIGHTER SAILED, AND HE WAS THE OBVIOUS CHOICE TO RETURN TO THE TOWN AND FIND OUT.



YOU WATCH
THE PORT. WHEN
THE JAP SHIP SAILS
YOU COME BACK
HERE TO TELL
US.

OK. I
GO NOW.

THE NATIVE WATCHED THE PORT CONSTANTLY, AND ON THE SECOND DAY WAS REWARDED WITH THE SIGHT OF THE JAP FREIGHTER MOVING SLOWLY AWAY FROM THE QUAY, HER DESTROYER ESCORT WAITING IN THE DISTANCE.

NIPPON SHIP SAIL AWAY.
NOW TO GO BACK
AND TELL BEN!

HE HURRIED OFF, HIS ONLY ARMAMENT THE NEW SPEAR HE HAD FASHIONED FOR HIMSELF WHILE HE WAITED.

MOVING SWIFTLY THROUGH THE JUNGLE, MUNDA REACHED THE COVE IN LESS THAN TWO DAYS. THERE HE PASSED ON HIS INFORMATION.

SHIP WITH
GOLD LEAVE TWO
DAYS AGO!

IMMEDIATELY HANK CROSBY GAVE THE ORDER FOR HIS CREWS TO PREPARE FOR SEA.

AS SOON AS IT WAS DARK THE FOUR P.T. BOATS SAILED ON A COURSE TO INTERCEPT THE JAP FREIGHTER AND HER DESTROYER ESCORT.

HOW SOON BEFORE WE SIGHT 'EM, COMMANDER?

ROUND ABOUT DAWN, BEN. SAY, THIS SURE IS GOING TO BE ONE FUN TRIP, EH?

BEN WAS NOT TOO SURE, FOR HE KNEW THE JAPS WOULD NOT GO DOWN WITHOUT A STRUGGLE.

DAWN FOUND THE AMERICAN VESSELS IN SIGHT OF THEIR PREY, AND HANK CROSBY EXCITEDLY ORDERED THE ATTACK.

DO YOU SEE ANYTHING, COMMANDER?

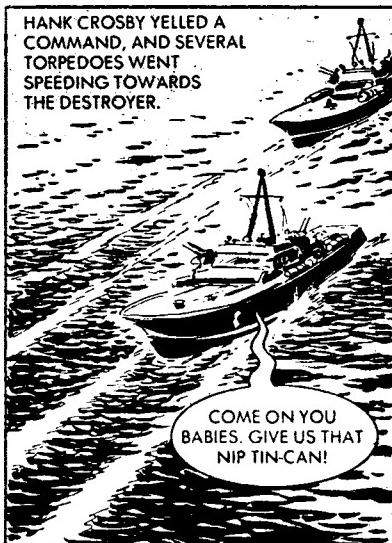
YUH BET I DO, BOY. ONE DESTROYER, AND ONE STINKING NIP FREIGHTER HEADING NORTH. THIS IS IT— CHARGE!

THE P.T. BOATS SPED TOWARDS THE FREIGHTER AND ITS ESCORT. BUT THE JAP DESTROYER OPENED FIRE, HITTING ONE OF THE AMERICAN VESSELS.



IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE JAPS WERE CONFIDENT OF BEATING OFF THE ATTACK.

HANK CROSBY YELLED A COMMAND, AND SEVERAL TORPEDOES WENT SPEEDING TOWARDS THE DESTROYER.



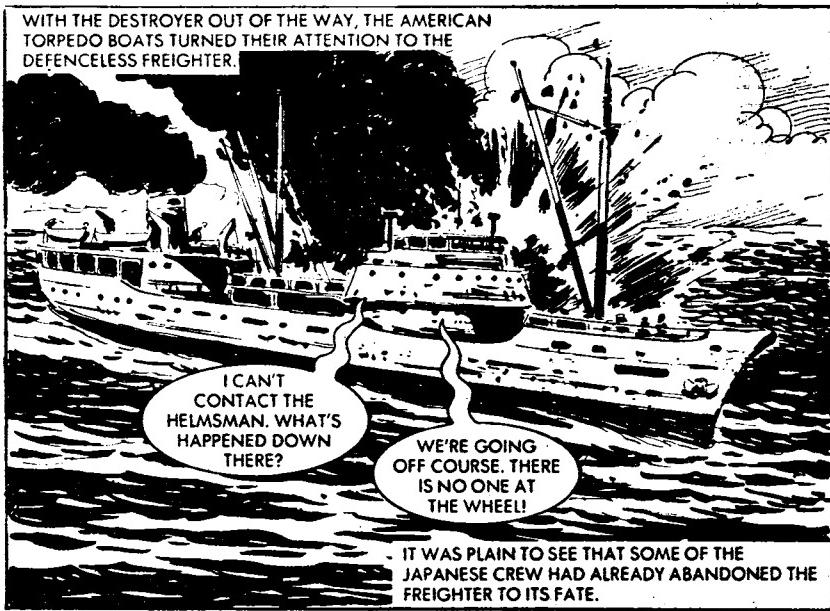
THREE OF THE AMERICAN TORPEDOES WERE BANG ON TARGET, AND WERE ENOUGH TO SPELL THE END FOR THE JAP DESTROYER.



THE DESTROYER SLOWLY KEELED OVER, AND THE AMERICANS WATCHED IN SATISFACTION AS THE JAPANESE CREW ABANDONED SHIP.



WITH THE DESTROYER OUT OF THE WAY, THE AMERICAN TORPEDO BOATS TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO THE DEFENCELESS FREIGHTER.



OUT OF CONTROL, THE CRIPPLED FREIGHTER SWUNG SLOWLY ROUND TO FACE THE AMERICAN BOATS.

SHE'S
HEADING
OUR WAY.

FEEL LIKE
BOARDING HER,
BEN?

THE COMMANDER WAS ENJOYING HIMSELF IMMENSELY.

AS THE P.T. BOAT DREW ALONGSIDE THE FREIGHTER, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT ONE OR TWO OF THE AMERICAN TORPEDOES HAD DONE THEIR JOB, FOR SEVERAL FIRES WERE RAGING UNCONTROLLABLY ON THE JAP VESSEL'S DECK.

SHE'S
ALL OURS,
FELLAS!

I JUST HOPE
WE CAN GET HOLD
OF THE GOLD,
MATE!

IRON-FIST'S GREED WAS SHOWING THROUGH
YET AGAIN.

BEN AND HIS COMPANIONS CLIMBED OVER THE DECK-RAIL, AND WERE MET BY A FUSILLADE OF SHOTS FIRED BY THE FREIGHTER'S REMAINING CREW MEMBERS.

WATCH OUT
FOR THEM SAMURAI
SWORDS, BUSTER!

EVER SEEN A
SAMURAI WITH HIS
SWORD WRAPPED ROUND
HIS NECK?

THE JAPS MANAGED TO SCORE A FEW HITS BEFORE BEN, MUNDA, IRON-FIST AND THE AMERICANS CHARGED INTO THEM.

IF THEY
WANT TO SURRENDER,
LET 'EMI

JAPS DON'T
SURRENDER. YOU HAVE TO
KILL THEM, FARRADAY!

THE JAPANESE SAILORS FOUGHT
DESPERATELY TO KEEP CONTROL OF
THEIR SHIP.

THE JAPS ON THE DECK OF THE FREIGHTER WERE SOON DEALT WITH, BUT FROM THE ENGINE-ROOM CAME A LAST DITCH CHARGE, LED BY NONE OTHER THAN KARL SCHULTZ, SENT ALONG TO SAFEGUARD THE GOLD.



AS SOON AS IRON-FIST SAW SCHULTZ, HIS EYES GLINTED ANGRILY, AND HE DARTED TOWARDS THE GERMAN.



SCHULTZ HAD TIME TO FIRE HIS LUGER ONCE, GRAZING IRON-FIST'S SHOULDER. BUT NOTHING COULD STOP THE SAILOR NOW..



AND THERE WAS NO DOUBT ABOUT IT — THE GERMAN WAS DEAD BEFORE HE HIT THE DECK.

SOON THE BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF THE JAP SHIP WAS OVER, AND THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF THE CREW WERE LOADED INTO THE LIFEBOATS. HANK CROSBY, HOWEVER, HAD SOME GOOD NEWS FOR BEN.

HEY, YOU GUYS! THIS IS THE SKIPPER OF THIS HUNK OF JUNK. HE'LL SHOW YOU WHERE YOUR GOLD IS.

THAT'S WHAT WE CAME HERE FOR.

THE JAP SKIPPER WAS EAGER TO GET OFF HIS SHIP BEFORE IT SANK, AND HE WILLINGLY TOOK BEN TO HIS CABIN AND SHOWED HIM WHERE THE GOLD WAS STORED.

HERE IS GOLD FROM MINE.

GOLD FROM SIMPSON'S MINE, YOU MEAN. LET'S GET IT OUT OF HERE!

THE JAP SKIPPER THEN BOLTED OUT OF THE CABIN, TERRIFIED THAT HE MIGHT MISS GETTING A PLACE IN ONE OF THE LIFE-BOATS.

ALL THAT REMAINED TO DO NOW WAS SPLIT THE GOLD, AND THEN RETURN TO THE WAITING P.T. BOATS. BUT BEN HADN'T COUNTED ON IRON-FIST'S GREED.

I LOST
MY SHIP ON THIS
VENTURE, FARRADAY.
MY SHARE OF THIS IS
THREE-QUARTERS!

THE DEAL
WAS FIFTY-FIFTY,
IRON-FIST.

BUT IRON-FIST WAS DETERMINED TO HAVE HIS OWN WAY — USING FORCE IF NECESSARY.

NO,
IRON-FIST!

CURSE YE,
FARRADAY. I'LL HAVE
IT ALL NOW!

MUNDA LOOKED ON ANXIOUSLY AS THE TWO MEN GRAPPLED.

THE NATIVE KNEW THAT IRON-FIST WOULD PROBABLY KILL HIS FRIEND, AND HE INSTINCTIVELY THREW HIS SPEAR AT THE SAILOR.



IRON-FIST HACKER WOULD NEVER USE HIS METAL FIST AGAIN.



BEN TOLD HANK CROSBY WHAT HAD HAPPENED, AND THE AMERICAN DECIDED THAT THE INCIDENT WOULD BE BEST FORGOTTEN.



IT WAS AGREED THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD SLIP BACK TO THEIR SECRET ANCHORAGE, BUT FIRST BEN AND MUNDA WERE PUT ASHORE AT A FRIENDLY VILLAGE UP THE COAST.



AT THE VILLAGE, BEN HIRED CARRIERS FOR THE GOLD, TO TAKE IT BACK TO THE BRITISH-HELD PART OF THE ISLAND.



AND WITH THE GOLD, BEN AND HIS UNIT WERE ABLE TO EQUIP THEMSELVES PROPERLY AND TO PLAY THEIR PART IN THE FUTURE CAMPAIGNS TO PUSH THE JAPS OFF THE ISLAND . . . WITH THE FURTHER HELP OF MUNDA, NOW A VERY PROUD CORPORAL!



Commando
THE END

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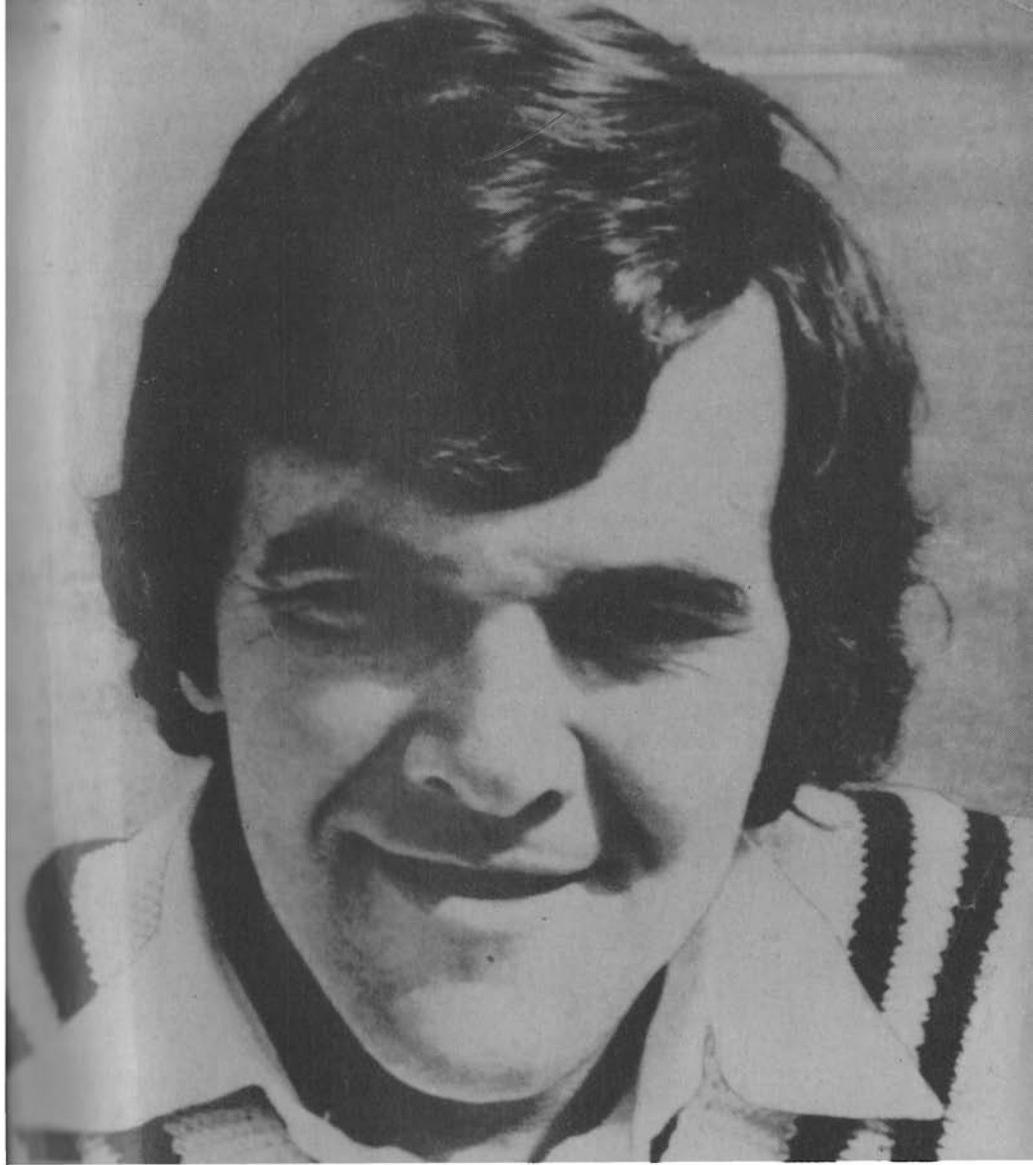
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Stars of Cricket — Stephen Rouse

NEW GUINEA GOLD

THE American P.T. boats warily circled the Japanese destroyer. One hit from its guns would spell instant death for the small vessels, but they knew they must sink it for it was guarding a merchant ship that was carrying a fortune in gold.

There were men on those boats who had trekked for weeks through jungles and over mountains to get that gold, and they weren't going to give up now.

Commando

